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AUTHOR	Hughes, Kenneth
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ABSTRACT

This paper describes how librarians can teach patrons the basics of hypertext markup language (HTML) so that patrons can publish their own homepages on the World Wide Web. With proper use of handouts and practice time afterwards, the three basics of HTML can be conveyed in only 60 seconds. The three basics are: the basic template of Web tags, used for all web pages, which can be copied from a standing file; certain typed characters that cannot be used as is; and a tag for a hyperlink. Suggestions are provided for customizing the 60-second web lesson for the needs of different patrons. Before learning any tags beyond the basics, a person should plan their Web page, and decide how their subject should be divided. The paper provides other basic tags: for clearly organizing and emphasizing parts of a page; for adding more "flash" by adding images; and for adding an e-mail link tag. Perhaps the ultimate goal of a Web teacher is to encourage people not only to complement their Web browsing with their own page, but to begin exchanging specific e-mail with others about their pages and interests. This level of engagement can truly show people the value of information and the newest methods of finding it. (SWC)

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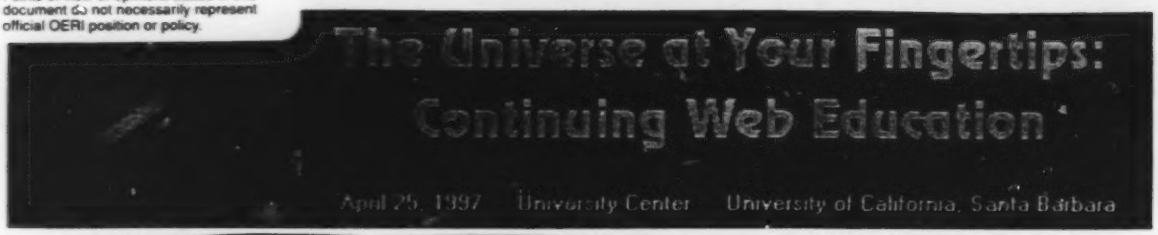

Web-Writing in One Minute -- and Beyond

Kenneth Hughes

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Modern libraries and librarians are often among the first to develop their own World Wide Web pages. Even among those of us who do not know how, there's a strong interest in learning, and an awareness of how many patrons would enjoy having their own presence on the Web... if only someone could teach them.

More and more these days, people say "the net" and really mean the Web. The Web is popular because it's so easy to use, simply browsing through what it offers. It's the first Internet feature that does not require knowing other people on the net and trusting them to write back, let alone for you to write code yourself-- in effect, it's a library.

But should we, as librarians, be satisfied with people reading but never getting involved?

Without a knowledge of HTML, Web users can still do instant research on whatever they wish, while all the time being exposed to the power of new information models. Our profession favors this in principle, certainly. But browsing is only the beginning of the appeal the Web can have; we all know people who've followed some published URL and wished they could have their own homepages up, or who we think would embrace the possibilities of Web publishing if they only knew how. In the end, who **doesn't** want to sound off on what's important to them?

And yet these people hold back. Clicking around cyberspace is easy, but creating on it is **Learning Computers** at the level of code, one of the most dreaded things a person can attempt. There's no way it could be as easy as using the Web, they're sure.

But as the title of this paper says, it can.

There are no small number of HTML tags in use today, but the truth is that if you separate the "window dressing" (no pun intended) from the bare basics it's very simple to set people up on the Web. After all, it's generally accepted that the best way to teach includes featuring what people value, in manageable doses.

In fact, in demonstrations I have shown that the initial sharing of basic HTML

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information can be done in sixty seconds, by the clock:

There are three things to learn. First is the basic template of Web tags, which can be copied out from a standing file:

<html>

<head><title>YOUR TITLE HERE</title></head>

<body>

<h1>YOUR TITLE AGAIN (OR ANOTHER VERSION)</h1>

ALL THE CONTENT HERE

</body>

</html>

Notice how the title appears in two places (the second is an unrelated, more traditional place to show a title), and all the rest of the content goes in one place after that.

Secondly, certain typed characters cannot be used as is, and must be replaced:

Paragraph-break <p>

" "

& &

< <

> >

Thirdly, even bare-bones HTML needs the tag for a hyperlink. This requires simply the other page's address and setting the following tags around the words you've chosen for the link:

<a>WHAT YOU'LL CLICK ON

With proper use of handouts and practice time afterwards, the above can be conveyed in only a minute if needed. Introducing people to HTML really can be that simple, by prioritizing the basics to let the student see that it works.

Specific lesson plans can be adapted out of this to suit different needs. For instance, for a colleague you might spend five minutes of each lunch hour for three days to convey the three key steps, allowing him/her to contemplate the growing Web page in off-hours. A one-hour class has ample time to let students explore these basics at their own pace, with each creating a page perhaps about each's favorite subject, or their business or resume or favorite Web sites. What matters is finding a form that takes full advantage of the simple content and appealling benefits of HTML to pull the student past any initial

awkwardness.

The same customizing principles can also be of value in continuing the lessons beyond the bare bones. I prefer to know how a student hopes to use the Web, so as to quickly teach the tags that convey that effect... while accompanying them with warnings about the dangers of cramming too many exotic Web tricks in just to show off.

Before learning any tags beyond the basics, I believe a person should have a plan as to what sections a subject should be divided into, and which ones are separate Web pages and which subsections of a page. Once those are carefully divided, with the top of each page and each link giving a clear sense of what's beyond, the person is ready to learn the proper tags. (For more about organization, see my "Organization in Web Structure" at http://www.barepower.net/~kenh/WebStructure.html. Also, rather than fully explain the tags' rules here, I refer novice readers to "A Beginner's Guide to HTML", at http://www.ncsa.uiuc.edu/General/Internet/WWW/HTMLPrimer.html)

Some people's priorities will be to clearly organize and emphasize their page's parts. For this, the essential tags are <h1>, , and <hr>. They will also want to itemize thoughts, lists of other links, and tables of contents; these call for <OL> and <LI> or the ever-popular <UL> and <LI>. And they should be aware of <a name=" "> and   to link to a place within a page.

(This goal also is best served when people remember to state the date and comprehensiveness of their information, and always begin a page by establishing enough of its context for any readers who may have come to it without using the main homepage first. Just by mastering these methods, users can ultimately create a true Vannevar Bush "memex" that arranges their and others' knowledge for maximum understanding.)

Other people want to put more flash into pages. For them, the priority is of course learning to place images with <img alt=" " src=" "> along with learning how their platform can both get and mount images through the Web. There is also <pre> that can be used to insert multiple spaces or paragraph breaks, and the importance of giving each of their pages a similar "masthead" for recognition value. Other tricks such as tables and backgrounds can be found at "HTML Goodies" at http://www.htmlgoodies.com/, and any HTML code can be double-checked by learning the View Source command in the browser to compare it to existing tags. Learning these methods lets people put together some decidedly impressive pages.

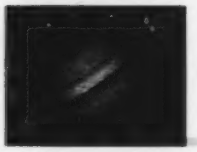
Finally, some people may want to not only mount Web pages but communicate with other users. These people should be helped with the e-mail link tag, , and perhaps the Forms tags (found in "HTML Goodies" above).

The last is perhaps the ultimate goal of a Web teacher, encouraging people not only to complement their Web browsing with their own page but to begin exchanging specific e-mail with others about their pages and interests. It is this level of engagement that can truly show people the value of information and the newest methods of finding it.

Information, and our skill in using it, is increasingly what lets a person succeed in the world today... just as misunderstanding it can encourage censorship or other distortions of that potential, and ignoring it lets a person fall behind while others draw further ahead. As librarians, we have a professional comittment to see that people make better use of the

world of information, not only when they walk through our doors but after they leave.

So, who here can spare sixty seconds?



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